

Uncle Terry

By CHARLES CLARK MUNN

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brook beside which they were talking the horse was a charming scenery as it came leaping over ledges, laughing, chattering and the pools with foam flecks, and the mill, with its great wheel dripping and clattering, and the mill itself even a greater curiosity than the schoolhouse. He hitched up, and, helping his fair comrade to alight, the two went inside the mill and watched the rumbling of the water. Alice introduced her escort to the miller, and after they had been the mysteries of grinding he led them out to the pond, and after the old leaky boat so it was the two visitors started after the miller.

"You don't tip me over," said "I can't swim." "I do I'll rescue you or drown you," he answered gallantly. "Silly nothings these two young men uttered as they made the circuit of the pond." "At least was just tasting the first illusion of love, and the glassy surface of the water that reflected the bending over it, the bunches of flag growing here and there and scattered patches of broad lily with now and then a white blow made a most picturesque background for the girl who sat in the miller's chair, shaded by the sun hat, was fairer to his eyes than any of the lilies she plucked, and he drew one sleeve up a little to show them the round arm and red hand she thrust into the wickered tempting enough to kiss. The miller had shut the gate and gone when they returned to the mill.

"You know," remarked Frank, "they had left the mill behind and driving through a bit of woods, I have anticipated this visit for some time. I know scarcely anything of the country, and it is all a revelation to me. I've seen pictures of old ponds covered with lilies, and no painter can ever put the reality on canvas. Why, that great wheel, with moss and churning away day so steadily, with a willow leaning over it, is a poem in itself." "The mill was built over a hundred years ago," observed Alice, "and has been grinding away ever since. I love it, for it takes me back to childhood, and, she added, a little sadly, makes me live over the happiest of my life, when father used to take me with him everywhere he went."

"But the mill will never grind with water that has passed," he quoted, "and the tender grace of a day is dead will never come back to me. I wish I had been country born. I wish I've missed countless pages of my memories. Do you know," he said, turning to his companion, "I rapidly falling in love with the try and—and its pretty sights?" "Those idea was it to pounce upon that way at school?" exclaimed suddenly, throwing off her retrospective mood and smiling again. "Is it yours or Bert's?"

"I confess I coaxed Bert to do it, had to take the train at 5 o'clock the morning and have coffee and at the station for breakfast and sandwiches for dinner." "And all to surprise one poor little old man and break up her school," in Alice. "Was it worth all that trouble?"

"Up to the present moment," answered Frank, "I must honestly say no. This drive and the mill I consider cheap at any price."

"Don't mean this part of the surprise," said Alice, blushing a little at open admiration. And then in self defense she added: "What has become the Gypsy? Bert writes me that the two are planning trips in her al-

though she is still in winter quarters," answered Frank. "I've been too busy



at silly nothings these two young people uttered!

"I'm law to do more than think over. I've reformed, you know," Alice made no reply. The memory of what he had so evidently wished her to forget regarding his reasons for this departure came to her in an instant and brought a little wonderment to the possible outcome of it. Turn which way she would and propose at topic she might, he seemed bound as it was a vehicle of his undisguised flirtation. She had wished to consider him as a friend, because

been a friend to her adored brother when that brother needed one, and while she had written him a dozen chatty letters which might be printed for all the privacy they contained, she had studiously refrained from allowing him to infer even that she had any special interest in his actions.

When they arrived home Albert was on the piazza and Aunt Susan had supper waiting. The table was set with blue ware of a very old and quaint pattern, and when Alice had filled a bowl with lilies for a centerpiece they gathered around and "passed things" in true country fashion. The evening was unusually warm for June, and after the two young men had smoked and chatted for half an hour Alice appeared dressed in spotless white, with a half open lily in her hair and another at her throat. The moon, which was nearing full, shone through the open spaces of the vineclad porch and added an ethereal touch to the sylphlike picture she presented.

"Well," she remarked cheerfully as she seated herself near her brother, "my time is yours, and what can I do to entertain you?"

"I had planned to take Frank to a trout brook tomorrow morning," responded Albert, "and in the afternoon you and he can hunt for mill ponds and grottoes, if you like, or gather laurel." "And leave me alone all the forenoon?" put in Alice. "No, thank you. I'm shut up for five days, and you can't get rid of me so easily. Why can't I go too?"

"I'm agreeable," replied her brother, "only a trout brook is not nice walking for a lady."

"I'm aware of that," she responded, "and you two can go fishing, and I'll hunt for laurel in the meantime. We can take a basket of lunch with us and make a day of it in the woods." Then, as a possible contingency presented itself to her, she added: "Why not let me invite my friend, Abby Miles, to go for company? She and I can pick laurel, and when you have caught all the harmless little trout you want we can meet where we leave the wagon and have a picnic."

"That suits me," said her brother, and without waiting for further discussion this diplomatic fairy in white arose and remarked: "I'll get a shawl, and then I'll trouble you, Mr. Nason, to escort me over to Abby's. It's only a few rods, and I want you to meet her. She's ever so nice."

The plan as mapped by Alice was carried out to the letter, and when the two young men joined the girls at noon they found a broad flat rock in the woods had been covered with a tablecloth and spread with a tempting meal. The girls had gathered great bunches of pink laurel, and a cluster of it decked the table. After dinner Alice insisted that they visit the mill pond once more, and when they returned at night with two baskets of trout and laurel and pond lilies enough to stock a flower stand the day was voted an eminent success.

Frank made one error, however, for just before they left the mill he slipped away unobserved and, finding the miller, put a bit of paper into his hand with the remark, "Keep this to pay for the boat," and left him hurriedly. When the old man made examination he found he had a five dollar bill. To surprises of this kind he was not accustomed, and before noon the next day there wasn't a man, woman or child in Sandgate who had not heard of it.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THAT evening Frank begged for music, and Alice sang for two long hours. When the concert was ended Albert observed: "If there's one song in the house that you have not sung, Alice, I wish you would sing it. I hate to have you omit any."

"I have only sung what I was asked to," she replied. "Is not that so, Mr. Nason?"

"That is true," replied he boldly, "and you have not sung one that I wouldn't enjoy hearing again tonight." "Oh, I have enjoyed them all," said Albert, "only I thought you might have missed one, and, as Frank remarked coming home that he was hungry for music, I wanted him satisfied."

The next day they attended church, only this time all three walked back together. Alice was graciousness personified. All her jokes and smiles and all her conversation were lavished upon Frank. Several times Frank, who intuitively felt she did not wish to be left alone with him, started to ask her to take a walk that Sunday evening, but each time his discretion prevailed. "If she is willing to listen to any love-making, she has tact enough to give me a chance," he thought, "and unless she is I had better keep still." The evening was one to tempt Cupid, for the moonlight fell checkered through the half naked elms along the roadway, and where here and there a group of maples stood was a bit of shadow. The whippoorwills had just returned to Sandgate, and over the meadows scattered fireflies twinkled. The houses along the way to the village were wide apart and the evening air just right for a loitering walk. To Frank, anxious to say a few words that would further his hopes in the direction of this bewitching girl, it seemed a waste of good time not to take advantage of the evening. It was almost past and the lights in the houses across the valley had long since vanished when he obtained a little consolation.

The charm of the evening had stilled conversation, and neither had spoken for a long time when he said rather disconsolately: "My anticipated visit is almost over. May I ask you to go in and sing just one song for me, Miss Page?"

"With pleasure," she responded in her sweetest tone; "what shall it be?" "I will leave that to your selection," he replied.

Without a word she led the way in

and began searching among the pile of music on the piano, and, finding what she wanted, opened and spread the music on the rack.

It was "Ben Bolt."

She sang it in a minor key, and as the opening words, "Oh, don't you remember sweet Alice, Ben Bolt," floated on the still evening air they seemed to him fraught with a new meaning and that a veritable sweet Alice was bidding him, another Ben Bolt, not to forget her. When the last note had faded into the night air she turned her now serious eyes toward him.

"I thank you," he almost whispered. "And there won't be many waking moments in my future when I shall not think of—sweet Alice?"

It was not much of a love scene, but to him it seemed a wide open door of hope, and when many miles separated them, and for days, weeks and months afterward, even when doing his best to crowd dull law reports into his brain, the one tender glance she gave him and the tones of her voice came back with unfailing accuracy.

The first visit of Frank Nason to the Page home, his sleighrides with Alice and his appearance at church had caused no end of comment. It was known that he had been a classmate of Albert and came from Boston, and later Aunt Susan vouchsafed the information that she "guessed he came from one of the first families and that he appeared right well behaved."

It was all she really did know, for both Alice and her brother were considerate of her failings and knew it was not safe to discuss their visitor in her presence. The tempest of gossip had not more than half quieted down when it received a regular boom from his second coming. The pupils of the north end district school spread the news of their teacher's unexpected callers and that she had dismissed school at once and gone on with the



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stranger. Old Amos Curtis, the miller, told of their visit and, wonder upon wonder, how the next day "her beau" had given him a five dollar bill "jest fer lettin' 'em use a leaky old boat fer an hour."

The buxom Abby Miles had the best and longest story to tell, and her praise of Mr. Nason, how polite he was and "how he couldn't keep his eyes off'n Alice all the afternoon," was whispered to every girl she knew. The five dollar incident created the most gossip, however. The miller had remarked that a "young feller who threw money round that way must be rich," and that remark soon grew into a story that Alice Page's beau was worth a million and that she was engaged to him.

As might be expected, the subject of all this gossip heard none of it until the storm had reached alarming proportions. Mrs. Mears was the first one to tell the extent of the gossip.

"They tell me," said that worthy matron to Alice one Sunday after church, "that you ain't likely to teach school after this summer."

"And why not?" answered Alice. "Don't I give satisfaction?"

"Oh, 'tain't that. I guess you can imagine the reason, and I want to be the first to congratulate you. They tell me he's worth a pile o' money, an' he's sartainly well favored so far as looks goes; but, then, 'handsome is as handsome does' was allus my motto."

Alice colored.

"Do you mean Mr. Nason, my brother's friend?" she said seriously.

"Why, who else would I mean? I've heard that you was to be married this fall and that he is worth a million. They say he told Amos Curtis he was, though I don't believe that. But anyway, Amos says he gave him \$5 'jest fer usin' his old boat that wa'n't worth splittin' up fer kindlin's!"

"It's not true, not one word of it," exclaimed Alice angrily, "and if you care for me one bit I wish you would tell everybody I said so."

She waited to hear no more, nor for Aunt Susan, who had lingered to chat with some one, but walked home hurriedly, as if to hide herself. Once in the silent house she began to cool off.

"I won't believe he told Amos he was worth a million," she said to herself. "He isn't so stupid as that. But I am afraid the silly boy did give him \$5, which has started all this gossip."

When Aunt Susan came in she fairly pounced upon her. "Why haven't you told me, auntie, about all this gossip that's going the rounds regarding Mr. Nason and myself? I know you have heard it."

"It's all nonsense, Alice," answered that lady rather sharply, "and you are foolish to listen to 'em. I've heard it, of course, but so long as it's no discredit to you, why let it go into one ear and out t'other, same as I do! Folks must talk in this town, an' what they're sayin' 'bout you ought to make you feel proud—that a young fellow like him and worth more wanted to come

courtin', and he certainly showed he did or I'm no judge."

"He's got Aunt Susan on his side as well as Bert," Alice thought, "and I am glad I kept him at a distance, just to pay him for being so silly with his money."

Late that afternoon Alice called upon Abby Miles and talked about everything except the subject she most wanted to talk about, and then as Abby usually had a Sunday evening caller, Alice came home at dusk. Never before had the house seemed so lonely, and as she sat on the porch and tried to talk with Aunt Susan her thoughts were elsewhere.

When the lights across the valley, which served as curfew by saying bedtime when they went out, had disappeared, she came in and, seating herself in the dark at the piano, softly played the chords and hummed the words of a song.

"It'll come out all right," said Aunt Susan to herself, and she waited till Alice called to her to come in and go to bed.

CHAPTER XIX.

FRANK NASON had consoled himself during the many months of hard study with visions of a yachting trip in July and August, when perhaps in some manner Alice Page could be induced to come, with his mother and sisters to chaperon her and her brother and some other friends to complete the party.

He had the Gypsy put in first class shape and all her staterooms refurbished, and one in particular, which he intended Alice should occupy, upholstered in blue. So well formed were his plans that he timed the start so as to utilize the July moon for the first ten days and mapped out a trip taking in all the Maine coast, spending a week at Bar Harbor, and then a run up as far as Nova Scotia.

He had described all the charms of this trip to Alice and extended to her the most urgent invitation. He had obtained her brother's promise to supplement it and also to make one of the party, and he had persuaded his sister Blanch to aid him with his mother, but he had met discouragement on all sides.

In the first place, Alice wrote it was doubtful if she could go. It would be a delightful outing and one she would enjoy, but it would not be right to leave Aunt Susan alone for so long, and then, as her school did not close until the last of June, she would have no time to get ready.

To cap the climax of Frank's discomfiture, when July came his mother announced that she had decided to go to the mountains for the summer.

"It's no use, Bert," he said to his friend one evening. "I wanted your sister to go to Maine with us and mother and the girls and a few more to make a party, but it's no go. I can't induce your sister to join us, and it's no use if she would, for mother has determined to go to the mountains, and that settles it. If you and I have any cutting on the yacht we must make up a gander party."

"That suits me just as well as, and in fact better than, the other plan," replied Albert consolingly. "If we have a lot of ladies along we must dance attendance upon them, and if not we can fish, smoke, play cards, sing or go to sleep when we feel like it. I tell you, Frank," he continued, evidently desiring to cheer up that young man, "girls are all right as companions at home or at balls and theaters, but on a yacht they are in the way."

A week afterward, and early one bright morning, the Gypsy, with skipper, crew and a party of eight jolly young men on board, sailed out of Boston and that night dropped anchor under the lee of an island in Casco bay. She remained there one full day and the next ran to Boothbay and found shelter in a landlocked cove forming part of the coast line of Southport island. It was after dinner next day, and while the rest of the party were either playing cards or napping in hammocks under the awning, that Albert Page took one of the boats, his pipe and sketchbook and rowed down the coast a mile to an inlet he had noticed the day before. The outer point of this was formed by a bold cliff that he desired to sketch, and pulling the boat well up behind the inner point, tying the painter to a rock and taking the cushions along, he found a shady spot and sat down. The sloping rock he selected for a seat was a little damp, but he thought nothing of it, and lighting his pipe began sketching.

He worked for an hour putting the weed draped rocks and long swells that broke over them into his book, and then, lulled perhaps by the monotonous rhythm of the ocean, lay back on the cushions and fell asleep. The next he knew he was awakened by a cold sensation and found the tide had risen until it wet his feet. Hastily getting up, he took the cushions and returned to where he had left the boat, only to find it had disappeared. The rising tide had lifted the boat and painter from the rocks, and it was nowhere to be seen.

"There must be some road back up on the island," he thought, "that will lead me near the cove where the Gypsy is," and, still retaining the cushions, he started to find it. But he was a stranger to Southport island, and the farther away from the sea he got the thicker grew the tangle of scrub spruce and briers. It was too thick to see anywhere, and after a half hour of desperate scrambling the afternoon sun began to seem about due east. He had long since dropped the cushions, and finally, in sheer exhaustion, he sat down on a rock to collect himself.

"It looks as though I'm billed to stay here all night," he thought as he noted the lowering sun, "and nobody knows how much longer! There must be a

here, though, and I'm good if the light lasts long

d once more and had not gone ten rods ere he came to one, and then he breathed easier. His clothes were torn, his hands and face scratched by briars, and to save himself he couldn't make it seem but that the sun was setting in the east. He sat down to think. All sound of the ocean was gone, and a stillness that seemed to crawl out of the thicket was around him. He rested a few moments more and then suddenly heard the sound of wheels and presently saw, coming around the curve, an old fashioned carryall, worn and muddy, and, driving the horse at a jog trot, a man as dilapidated looking as the vehicle. Gladdened at the sight, he arose and, holding up his hand as a signal, halted the team. "Excuse me, sir," he said to the man, who eyed him curiously, "but will you tell me where I am?"

"Waal," was the answer in a slow drawl, "ye're on Southport island an' 'bout four miles from the jumpin' off place. Whar might ye be goin'? Ye looked bushed."

"I am," answered Page, "and badly bushed too. I lost my boat over back here on the shore and have had a cheerful time among the Mohawk briars. I belong to a yacht that is anchored in a cove of this island. I can't tell where, and if you will take me to her I'll pay you well."

The man in the wagon laughed. "Say, stranger," he observed with a chuckle, "you 'mind me o' the feller that got full an' wandered round for a spell till he fetched up to a house an' sed to the man that cum to the door, 'If you will tell me who I am or whar I am or whar I want ter go I'll give ye a dollar.'"

Page had to laugh in spite of his plight, for the humorous twinkle in the old man's eyes as he uttered his joke was infectious.

"I'd like ter 'commode ye," he added, "but as I'm carryin' Uncle Sam's mail an' must git home an' tend the light, an' as ye don't know whar ye want ter go, ye best jump in an' go down to Saint's Rest, whar I live, an' in the mornin' we'll try an' hunt up yer boat."

It seemed the only thing to do, and Albert availed himself of the chance.

"Can you tell the spot where you found me?" he said to the man as they started on. "I'd like to go back there tomorrow and find my cushions."

"Waal," was the answer, "as I've druv over this road twice a day for nigh on to thirty year, I'm tolerable familiar with it. My name's Terry, an' I'm keeper o' the light at the Cape an' carry the mail to sorter piece out on. Who might ye be?"

"My name's Page, and I'm from Boston, and a lawyer by profession," replied Albert.

Uncle Terry eyed him rather sharply. "I wouldn't 'a' took ye fer one," he said. "Ye look too honest. I ain't much stuck on lawyers," he added with a chuckle. "I've had 'sparence with 'em. One o' 'em sold me a hole in the ground onct, an' it cost me the hull o' twenty years' savin's! Ye'll 'scuse me fer bein' blunt—it's my natur'."

"Oh, I don't mind," responded Albert laughingly. "But you mustn't judge us all by one rascal."

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

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